

House Bill 480

March 24, 2009

Presented by Joe Maurier  
Senate Fish and Game Committee

Mr. Chairman and committee members, for the record I am Joe Maurier, Acting Director of Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP).

I rise in support of HB 480.

The disengagement of children from the natural world and a decline in participation in outdoor related activities is of national concern. These trends have significant implications to the traditions of hunting and fishing as well as long-term support for the conservation of fish and wildlife resources. Engaging children at an early age in hunting activities and doing so in a family supported fashion are both critical to reversing declining rates of participation. While rates of recruitment for youth remain relatively strong in Montana, that is not the case in many other states, especially more urban locations.

This legislation is intended to reduce the barriers that cost may represent to participation by nonresident minors whose parents or family are traveling to Montana for either upland game bird or migratory game bird hunting activities. The discounted price of \$35 for a combined upland game bird/migratory game bird license represents a significant cost savings when compared to existing nonresident license fees. This opportunity will apply to any nonresident youth regardless of state of residence and represents a simplified approach to the license reciprocity issue. More fundamentally, it provides a reasonable opportunity to include your children when planning a bird hunting or waterfowl hunting trip to Montana.

The fees from this licenses will continue to be dedicated to access enhancement and habitat programs as specified in statute. The specified ages conform to resident youth bird and waterfowl hunting licensing requirements which begin to change at 16 years of age when a federal migratory duck stamp is required for all persons.

Importantly, this legislation also addresses an omission in existing migratory game bird license statutes. Currently, there is no provision in law for nonresident youth aged 12 - 15 to obtain a license to hunt waterfowl. HB 480 would eliminate that oversight.

FWP encourages a "do concur" vote on HB 480.

Thank you.